

Colbert, Kathie

From: Clif Sorenson [Clif.Sorenson@co.eau-claire.wi.us]
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2007 4:55 PM
To: Rep.Musser
Subject: Veterans' Hearings June 13, 2007

Rep. Musser:

I am sorry I am unable to attend your important hearings on veterans' legislation scheduled for June 13.

I wish to advise you that the Wisconsin State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America are in support of the following legislation:

AB-292. (Vruwink) Expands eligibility for the veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit.

AB-365. (Musser) Expands eligibility for the veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit.

AB-362. (Musser) Provides financial aid to military families, creates an individual income tax checkoff for the military family relief fund, provides an exemption from emergency rule procedures.

If you have any questions concerning our support of this legislation, please contact me directly.

Thank you for your solid support of legislation for veterans, dependents and survivors.

Still Serving America,

Clif Sorenson, Legislative Chair
Vietnam Veterans of America
Wisconsin State Council
715-839-4744



VETERANS AFFAIRS

Jim Doyle, Governor
John A. Scocos, Secretary

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June 13, 2007

Representative Terry Musser, Chair
Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs
State Capitol 11 West
Madison, WI 53708

RE: 2007 Assembly Bills 292, 365, and 362

Dear Chairman Musser and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and the state's half-million veterans we serve, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the following bills under consideration by the Committee today.

Assembly Bill 292 - Relating to: expanding eligibility for the veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit.

Among WDVA's legislative priorities are to expand eligibility for the property tax credit. In WDVA's budget request, the expansion was proposed in three areas: to expand the credit to include veterans with at least a 30% service-connected disability combined rating, include those with Individual Unemployability; to remove the age limit, which is currently set at age 65; and to liberalize the residency requirement to include those who were not Wisconsin residents at the time of entry onto active duty, as current law requires, but who have been a Wisconsin resident for a fixed number of years (e.g. 15, 10, etc.).

AB 292 would achieve the third of the department's current three priorities for expanding eligibility for the credit by reducing the residency requirement. In this bill, it would be reduced to just 5 years of state residency. Currently, an eligible veteran must have been a state Resident at the time of Entry onto Active Duty.

Among the most poignant examples of the challenges posed by the current limits of the property tax credit was contact with the department by an elderly WWII veteran who qualified for the property tax credit except for meeting the current residency requirement. He had moved to Wisconsin in 1946, shortly after completing his WWII military service, and had lived his entire life in the state since that time -- more than 60 years. Enacting SB 101 would expand the credit to include veterans like this one.

Assembly Bill 365 - Relating to: expanding eligibility for the veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit.

AB 365 would also achieve the third of the department's current three priorities for expanding eligibility for the credit by reducing the residency requirement, similarly reducing the required residency to just 5 years of state residency.

AB 365 would also achieve the second of the department's current three priorities for expanding eligibility for the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit by eliminating the current age requirement of at least age 65.

Many totally disabled veterans, particularly those with spinal cord injuries or with terminal illnesses such as ALS – Lou Gherig's disease, may never live to age 65. They, too, should be among the veterans we assist to stay in their homes as property taxes rise at rates faster than their fixed incomes. We are pleased to be in full support of this bill.

This bill also partially achieves the department's final goal, by expanding eligibility for the credit to those who have been determined by the federal VA to be individually unemployable.

Assembly Bill 362 (LRB-2277)

Relating to: providing financial aid to military families, creating an individual income tax checkoff for the military family relief fund, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.

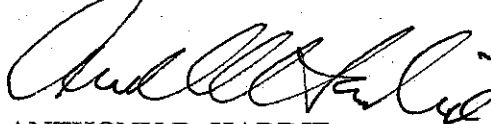
The department is in full support of this measure, which would aid military families in need. Currently, the department has language that created a similar program under the 2005-07 biennial budget act. However, that language was insufficient to appropriately distribute the approximately \$7,000 that has been received as donations earmarked for this purpose.

We appreciate the efforts of the bill's author and the nearly 60 consponsors on this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of these significant pieces of legislation, for the opportunity to testify here today on these important bills, and for your continued advocacy on behalf of those who have served our nation in its times of need.

A written copy of this testimony has been provided to the clerk, and I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



ANTHONY D. HARDIE
WDVA Executive Assistant